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SUBJECT: LESOTHO: ANNUAL MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY EVENT WELL RECEIVED

¶1. SUMMARY: On January 22, U.S. Embassy Maseru held a highly successful event commemorating the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.. Ambassador Rob Nolan addressed some 125 participants, including Lesotho's First Lady and numerous community leaders, with a message on the relevance of MLK's legacy in modern Lesotho. The Ambassador presented awards to student MLK essay contest winners and introduced a brief film before inviting a prominent Basotho academic to deliver the keynote address. The session's lively question and answer session and the positive feedback to Embassy officers demonstrated that this annual event once again helped draw attention to Dr. King's legacy and the example it offers a young nation seeking to develop and prosper. END SUMMARY.

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Maseru Honors MLK  
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¶2. On January 22, U.S. Embassy Maseru conducted a highly successful annual event, hosted by Ambassador Rob Nolan, commemorating the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Among the 125 or so individuals present at the event were First Lady Ms. Mosisili (wife of the Prime Minister), diplomatic chiefs of mission, prominent academic Professor L.B.B.J. Machobane, and a number of other notable figures and community leaders. Ambassador Nolan opened the event with an address highlighting Dr. King's legacy and its relevance to modern Lesotho. He then called on citizens of Lesotho to dedicate themselves to transforming Lesotho in a positive manner, noting that "If you are a member of this effort, then I promise today that you have a friend in the United States Government and the American people."

¶3. Ambassador Nolan then introduced a 20-minute clip from the PA/OBS-supplied PBS film production "Citizen King." After the film clip showing, the Ambassador presented awards to the top participants in the Embassy's 2007 MLK essay contest, the winner of which read her essay to the audience. Keynote speaker Dr. Molisana Molisana, an acclaimed Basotho academic and research scientist, spoke of Dr. King's struggle and how his life exemplified the way political change can be achieved. He compared Dr. Martin Luther King to the founder of the Basotho nation, King Moshoeshoe I, who had impressed upon his people the necessity of patience and forgiveness which ultimately brought about change during an era of war and hatred in Southern Africa.

¶4. The session ended with a vibrant discussion period during which members of the audience commented on Dr. King's legacy and the future of Lesotho. Diplomats, academics, local opposition party figures, and members of the American community stood to express their thoughts on the day's proceedings eloquently and poignantly.

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Audience Size and Press Coverage

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¶5. The event was attended by approximately 125 individuals. Subsequent press coverage was provided through the Mololi newspaper and the state-owned Lesotho News Agency (LENA) wire service (LENA reports are typically read on air by local radio stations). The press coverage was overwhelmingly positive.

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Positive Feedback, American Values Shine  
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¶6. COMMENT: Judging from the immediate feedback after the event, the annual MLK forum was once again very positively received. Several of the guests (including the South African High Commissioner) were so taken with the film "Citizen King" that they asked the PAO for copies of the documentary. Audience members left the event with a better understanding of American history, values, and principals. We look forward to our annual MLK event to be a regular and anticipated touchstone of our mission's PD calendar. END COMMENT.

NOLAN